

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-10

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R 110031Z DEC 74

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2492

INFO .AMCONSUL BRISBANE BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL PERTH BY POUCH

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

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LABOR FOR ROBERT HALL, MANPOWER DIVISION

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, AS

SUBJECT: GOA ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF NEW SECRETARY OF LABOR

1. FEDERAL MINISTER OF LABOR CAMERON ANNOUNCED DEC 9 APPOINTMENT OF DR. PETER WILENSKI, FORMER PRIVATE SECRETARY TO PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM, AS NEW SECRETARY OF LABOR, VICE DR. IAN SHARP, EFFECTIVE MARCH 31, 1975. WILENSKI, 35 YEARS OLD, HOLDS SEVERAL DEGREES INCLUDING MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FROM HARVARD. HE HAS FILLED FOREIGN SERVICE ASSIGNMENTS IN CANADA AND SOUTH VIETNAM AND AT THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL TREASURY AS AN ADVISER ON FOREIGN AID.

2. CAMERON SIMULTANEOUSLY ANNOUNCED APPOINTMENT OF DR. SHARP TO BENCH OF CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION COMMISSION COINCIDENT WITH HIS DEPARTURE AS PERMANENT HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, POSITION HELD SINCE EARLY DAYS OF WHITLAM GOVERNMENT IN DECEMBER 1972. WHILE WILENSKI APPOINTMENT CREATED SOME SURPRISE, SHARP'S NEW APPOINTMENT HAS BEEN EXPECTED EVER SINCE HE REACHED NORMAL RETIRING AGE CURING CALENDAR YEAR 1974.

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3. SHARP DEPARTURE QUIETLY AND WIDELY WELCOMED BY TOP OFFICIALS IN DEPARTMENT BUT WILENSKI APPOINTMENT CAUSING SOME DISQUIET AS HE HAS NO ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE. DEPARTMENT OFFICERS HAVE COMPLAINED TO LABATT ON MANY OCCASIONS THAT SHARP TENURE HAS REDUCED EFFICIENCY AND MADE SHAMBLES OF IMPORTANT NEW PROGRAMS, DELAYED IN IMPLEMENTATION FOR MONTHS BECAUSE OF HIS INABILITY TO MAKE CLEAR DECISIONS. OFFICIALS THEREFORE WATCHING TO SEE IF ADVENT OF WILENSKI WILL IMPROVE INTERNAL OPERATIONS.

4. COMMENT: LABATT EXPECTS THAT WILENSKI, HIGHLY POLITICAL ANIMAL WITH RECORD MOSTLY IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WILL REMAIN IN CANBERRA POWER CENTER, ADMINISTERING MELBOURNE-SITED LABOR DEPARTMENT THROUGH EXPERIENCED DEPUTY. IMMIGRATION SECTION ALREADY BEING RUN BY HIGHLY QUALIFIED DEPUTY JOHN DEMPSEY, WHO HAS MANY YEARS EXPERIENCE IN FORMER SEPARATE DEPARTMENT. APPOINTMENT, ACCORDING TO PRESS, RECEIVED STRONG OPPOSITION WITHIN CABINET. LABATT FEELS MOVE IS ATTEMPT BY PRIME MINISTER TO RUN AROUND END OF TROUBLESOME MINISTER OF LABOR BY REPLACING SHARP, REGARDED AS CAMERON SYCOPHANT, WITH APPOINTEE MORE SENSITIVE TO PRIME MINISTER'S WISHES. LABATT FEELS BADLY MUDDLED LABOR DEPARTMENT HAS NO PLACE TO GO BUT UP. WILENSKI APPOINTMENT, ALTHOUGH HIGHLY POLITICAL IN NATURE, SEEMS TO BE WELCOMED BY VETERAN, EXPERIENCED DEPARTMENT HEADS IN TECHNICALLY COMPLICATED ORGANIZATION. ALSO, GOOD RELATIONS HAVE LONG EXISTED BETWEEN WILENSKI AND BOB HAWKE, PRESIDENT, AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS. THIS MAY ADD MUCH TO MAKE UP FOR THOROUGHLY BAD SITUATION, NOW EXISTING BETWEEN MINISTER OF LABOR CAMERON AND HAWKE, WHICH HAS INTERFERED WITH ORDERLY DAY-TO-DAY CONTACT, ESSENTIAL BETWEEN UNIONS AND LABOR DEPARTMENT.
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